DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 881 PS 007 391

AUTHOR Brody, Grace F.
TITLE The Development of Aesthetic Preferences: A Comparison of American and Jamaican Children.
PUB DATE Sep 72
NOTE 8p.; Paper Presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (80th, Honolulu, Hawaii, September 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Aesthetic Education; Age Differences; *Child Development; *Cross Cultural Studies; Disadvantaged Youth; *Early Childhood; Foreign Countries; Maturation; Social Differences; Socioeconomic Background; Tables (Data); *Visual Literacy
IDENTIFIERS *Jamaica; United States

ABSTRACT

The aesthetic preferences of 224 Jamaican children and 558 previously-studied American children are reported in this paper. Both samples of subjects included male and female children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. The age groups studied were 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6-year-olds and a combined group of children 7-years-old and older. Each child was asked to identify an ideal representation (the "nicest") of a geometric figure from a card containing it and two other less perfect representations. Four figures were used, and each figure appeared on three cards. A consistent choice of the ideal representation of the figure on all three cards was scored as a positive response. Data tables present the differences in percentages of positive scores for each age group in both the American and Jamaican samples. Also, differences between the scores in age groups are compared cross-culturally for the upper and lower class samples. Concluding discussion contends that the findings tend to confirm the notion of the development of an aesthetic sense of abstract form as a part of the normal maturational process. (SDH)

MAY 1 3 1974

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 094881

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AESTHETIC PREFERENCES: A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND JAMAICAN CHILDREN

Grace F. Brody

School of Applied Social Sciences

Case Western Reserve University

Cleveland, Ohio

A Paper Presented at the 80th Annual Convention
American Psychological Association
Honolulu, Hawaii
September 2-8, 1972

PS 007391

A previous study (Brody, 1970) reported the use of the Aesthetic Perception Test (APT) to study the development in children of consistent preferences for the ideal representation of geometric forms. The forms used were the circle, the rectangle, the diamond, and the horizontally and vertically bisected square. The ideal representation together with two more or less distorted representations were displayed in a different order on each of a set of three cards for each figures. A consistent choice of the ideal form on all three cards was scored as a positive response. Children were tested individually in a game-like situation, in which the child was asked to point to the figure in the card which looked "nicest" to him. From the results of testing over 500 American children aged three to seven, male and female and from both advantaged and disadvantaged environments, the differences in percentage of positive scores, which ranged from 9.25% for three year olds to 85% for seven year olds, suggested that an aesthetic sense with regard to basic visual phenomena developed as part of the maturational process in the young child.

The present study sought to carry the investigation further through a cross-cultural comparison with 224 Jamaican children from the same age range, also of both sexes and from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. The age distribution for both the American and Jamaican samples are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Age and Sex Distribution of Samples

	American			Jamaican		
Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
3	47	61	108	5	5	10
4	175	93	268	10	16	26
5	68	64	132	26	18	44
6	14	11	25	20	18	38
7 and over	15	10	25	61	45	106
Totals	319	239	558	122	102	224

The differences in percentage of positive scores for each age group (which was statistically significant between all age groups in the American sample) followed the same general trend in the Jamaican sample, although the differences between ages were not as sharp. The results by age group for both American and Jamaican samples, with z scores for the differences between age groups within each sample and for age groups between samples, are shown in Table 2. The higher percentages of positive responses in the American sample tended to be statistically significant.

Table 2

Positive Scores by Sample and Age Group

Age Group	American		Jamaican		American-Jamaican Differences	
	Positive Scores (%)	z^a	Positive Scores (%)	z^a	Positive Scores (%)	z^b
3	9.25		5.00		4.25	.91NS
4	23.04	3.51***	13.46	1.45*	9.58	2.26**
5	35.42	2.78***	28.41	2.94***	7.01	1.75*
6	55.00	1.85**	29.61	.24NS	25.39	4.07***
7 & over	85.00	2.31**	54.58	5.30***	30.52	5.67***

[a]One-tail tests between age groups.

[b]Two-tail tests between age groups.

*$p < .10$.

**$p < .05$.

***$p < .01$.

It should be pointed out that the contrasting socioeconomic backgrounds of the children in the American group resulted from children coming from the inner-city Headstart and day care centers and from suburban nursery schools and community centers. In Jamaica the contrast was even greater, with most of the disadvantaged group coming from a large municipal institution for dependent children, may of whom had been abandoned or neglected by their families. The advantaged group were pupils of a private school to which affluent families sent their children.

The differences between the upper and lower class children tended to be small in the American sample, with no statistically significant differences after age four. In the Jamaican sample, however, the upper class children performed at statistically significantly higher levels at ages five and at ages seven and over.

A comparison of the two samples by age group and socioeconomic class throws more light on the differential effects of socioeconomic class. In lower class children, the differences at ages three and four are not significant. However, at ages five and older the American lower class children are significantly ahead of their more deprived Jamaican counterparts (Table 3). This finding is in accord with the gradual increase of developmental retardation associated with severe environmental deprivation.

Table 3

Positive Scores by Sample and Age Group:

Lower Class

Age Group	American		Jamaican		American-Jamaican Difference	
	N	Positive Scores (%)	N	Positive Scores (%)	Positive Scores (%)	z[a]
3	54	7.41	10	5.00	2.41	.55NS
4	52	16.78	9	8.33	8.45	1.30NS
5	85	32.06	7	7.14	24.92	2.77***
6	22	54.55	13	21.15	33.40	3.88***
7 and over	18	90.28	64	47.65	52.63	6.51***

[a]Two-tail tests.

***p < .01.

PS 007691

On the other hand, the advantaged American and Jamaican children are much more similar. The higher percentage of positive scores on the part of the American children is significant at age four, and nearly so at age five, but with age six and older the differences are no longer statistically significant (Table 4).

Table 4

Positive Scores by Sample and Age Group:

Upper Class

Age Group	American		Jamaican		American-Jamaican Differences	
	N	Positive Scores(%)	N	Positive Scores(%)	Positive Scores (%)	z[a]
3	54	11.11	0	--	--	--
4	116	37.25	17	16.18	21.07	3.47***
5	47	41.49	37	32.43	9.06	1.71*
6	3	50.00	25	34.00	16.00	1.09NS
7 and over	7	71.43	42	64.88	6.55	.56NS

[a]Two-tail tests.

*$p < .10$.

***$p < .01$.

In general, the findings with the Jamaican sample tend to confirm the notion of the development of an aesthetic sense of abstract form as a part of the normal maturational process. Although slowed by conditions of extreme deprivation, it nevertheless emerges in an age sequential pattern. There needs to be, of course, further exploration of this suggested developmental hypothesis in cultures which offer more extreme contrast.

REFERENCE

Brody, G.F. The development of visual aesthetic preferences in young children. Sciences de l'Art, 1970, 7, (1 and 2) 25-29.